



# Indigenous Beauty

MASTERWORKS OF AMERICAN INDIAN ART FROM THE DIKER COLLECTION

February 12–May 8, 2016

Toledo  
Museum  
of  
Art



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Featuring superlative works selected from the collection of Charles and Valerie Diker, *Indigenous Beauty: Masterworks of American Indian Art from the Diker Collection* celebrates the visionary creativity and technical mastery of native North American arts and artists across many generations and cultures. Created often as works of spiritual, ceremonial, or cultural significance, the objects displayed in the exhibition also exhibit artistic qualities like innovative uses of materials; precision of workmanship; ingenious deployment of pattern, design, and abstraction; and expressiveness of form and representation.

Indigenous North America encompasses a remarkable range of cultural and historical diversity. The works in this exhibition span the entire continent, and are organized into 11 different sections, each reflecting an artistic tradition defined by geography, media, and common past. Together, these captivating objects and their individual stories convey the extraordinary breadth of Native American experience in North America.



## NORTHERN NORTHWEST COAST

Three Indigenous groups inhabit the northernmost coastal archipelago of British Columbia and southeastern Alaska: the Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit. They used their large seaworthy canoes to nurture long-distance relations between coastal villages. Potlatches (ritual feasts) occasioned invitations from distant neighbors and encouraged the exchange of ideas, ceremonies, and art forms between tribal groups. Northern Northwest Coast artists carved, painted, and wove objects for public display: masks and musical instruments for dramatic performances; headdresses, garments, and other kinds of regalia worn at potlatches; and beautiful bowls and serving utensils for feasts. Images of animals and mythical creatures celebrated family origin stories and displayed clan emblems (crests).

**Tlingit, Chilkat, Klukwan, Alaska. Tunic and Leggings.** Cedar bark, wool, metal cones, late 19<sup>th</sup> century. 44 1/2 x 14 5/8 in. Diker no. 795. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

The cedar bark warps of this tunic are largely invisible beneath wefts of white mountain-goat wool dyed with black, gold, and blue to create pictorial designs of birds. Members of high-ranking families wore garments such as this one—woven by Tlingit women—during feasts called potlatches as testament to their wealth and prominence.







## SCULPTURE OF THE SOUTHERN NORTHWEST COAST

The coastal regions of present-day Oregon, Washington State, and southern British Columbia provided nurturing environments for settlements of people who spoke variations of the expansive Salishian and Penutian (including Chinook) language family. Archaeological evidence testifies to deep and ancient roots for inhabitants throughout the region, including the coast, but also areas inland and across the Cascade Mountains and into the Plateau. Carved bowls and spoons of the coastal Salishian-speaking peoples attest to lively ceremonial practices of feasting and exchange. The sleek, reductive forms of the artists' carving style often depict spirit figures and faces derived from religious beliefs and ceremonies.

**Ancestral Columbia River people, Columbia River Valley, Washington State or Oregon. Figure (Pendant?).** Antler, 3<sup>rd</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century. 10 1/8 x 3 x 1/4 in. Diker no. 529. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

This figurine wears a distinctive headdress and apron and displays body tattoos or ornaments. It is one of a small number of antler figures recovered from locations ranging from the Columbia River Valley to Puget Sound in Washington State. While virtually nothing is known of their purpose, they represent the earliest known figural art from this region.



## ANCIENT IVORIES FROM THE BERING STRAIT REGION

Ancient hunters of the western Arctic pursued walrus and other sea mammals from settlements perched on the coasts and archipelagos between Siberia and Alaska that ring the Bering Sea. They made harpoons, tools, and other implements from the ivory tusks of their quarry. These settlements—abandoned at least 1,500 years ago—lie buried, the dark earth staining the ivory artifacts in rich shades of brown to nearly black. The graceful engravings that embellish ancient Arctic ivory weapons honored the animals being hunted. Carved faces and animal-like forms evoke spirit beings that helped the hunters locate their prey.

**Old Bering Sea III culture, Bering Strait region, Alaska. Harpoon Counterweight (Winged Object).** Walrus ivory, 5<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. 2 x 7 1/2 x 1/2 in. Diker no. 731. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

This graceful object carved of walrus ivory fit on one end of an ancient Arctic harpoon as a counterweight to the heavy toggle point and foreshaft on the striking end. Darkened by centuries in the ground, its surface is carved in one of the most elegant of the Arctic engraving styles.





## MASKS FROM THE ALASKAN ARCTIC

Today's Arctic peoples of coastal Alaska include the Inupiat of the Far North, the Yup'ik of western Alaska, the Alutiiq, southwest of the Yup'ik in the central Gulf of Alaska, and the Aleut (or Unangan) of the Aleutian Islands. All of these peoples practiced mask-making and performance. These performances were most often experienced accompanied by songs and drumming at the customary multi-community festivals enjoyed during the long Arctic winter. Some masks depict animal spirits; others represent the "other-than-human" spirits encountered by shamans. Their inventive forms describe the otherworldly strangeness of these rarely encountered spirits, while the songs the mask wearers perform often recall the wonder of these experiences.

**Yup'ik, Alaska. Mask.** Wood, pigment, vegetal fiber, 1916–18. 20 1/2 x 14 x 8 in. Diker no. 788. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

This spirit mask combines several fragments in an abstracted composition. A grinning face appears in the central section, while on the right a human hand grasps a salmon and a seal, with its thumb wrapped around the tail and its fingers visible along the fish's back. On the left, a sea bird becomes the face's chin. When worn, masks like these performed in pairs to tell stories accompanied by dance and song.



## WESTERN BASKETS

The territories now encompassed by the state of California and parts of Nevada and Utah are among the most culturally rich and diverse regions of Indigenous North America. Women basket makers had an intimate knowledge of the ecosystems and seasonal changes of many types of plants. This has remained true over time, despite the ravages of colonialism: Spanish colonizers of the 18th and 19th centuries, followed by Anglo-Americans, mounted a sustained assault on California Indians, driving them from their homelands and decimating their numbers. Some indigenous families responded by adapting longstanding basket-making traditions and skills, marketing baskets to outsiders as a strategy for economic and cultural survival. Many of the baskets in the exhibition represent innovative creations made for market by the most notable basket weavers of the day.

**Louisa Keyser (also known as Datsolalee), Washoe, about 1831–1925; Carson City, Nevada. Basket Bowl.** Willow shoots, redbud shoots, bracken fern root, 1907. 12 1/2 x 16 5/8 in. Diker no. 326. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

Louisa Keyser was trained from childhood in the traditional techniques of Washoe basket-weaving. Under the patronage of a Carson City businessman, she produced a remarkable series of spherical basketry bowls between 1895 and her death in 1925; then and today, these works stand at the apogee of Native basket art. This design, which Keyser's dealer called "harbor lights," is repeated in a small number of her finest baskets.





## KATSINA DOLLS OF THE HOPI AND ZUNI PUEBLOS

These figures carved of cottonwood came from the Hopi and Zuni communities of present-day Arizona and New Mexico. They represent Katsinam (singular Katsina), spiritual beings that help Hopi and Zuni people in many different ways. Katsinam visit communities from December to July to perform ceremonies and dance in ritual sequences timed to coincide with the agricultural cycle. Dolls like these, called *tihu* in the Hopi language, traditionally are given to young girls and to brides, encouraging them to become future mothers of the community. However, Zuni and Hopi carvers began to offer Katsina dolls for sale to outsiders as early as the 1920s. These objects, made specifically for outsiders, have a different status from the masks and other ritual items used during Katsina ceremonies, which remain the exclusive property of their communities.

**Hopi, Arizona. *Qötsa Nata'aska Katsina*.** Cottonwood, cloth, hide, metal, pigment, about 1910–30. 18 1/2 x 6 x 10 in. Diker no. 831. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

A trading-post tag on the back of this figure confirms that it was carved for the market. It represents Nata'aska, an uncle of the Ogre family of Katsinam who visit Hopi villages in midwinter to discipline and cleanse the community of bad behavior. Characterized as a ravenous carnivore, he carries a saw to cut up bones.



## SOUTHWEST POTTERY

The traditions of Pueblo painted pottery of the American Southwest date back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. The production of Pueblo pottery has always drawn upon local knowledge and techniques passed down from generation to generation. Each community created its own distinctive style, enriched by trade across great distances. Ancient painted designs on the black-and-white pottery were inspired by the shapes of thunderclouds, lightning bolts, and spiraling water. While traditionally Pueblo pottery served culinary, storage, and ceremonial purposes, as railroads began to strengthen connections between the Southwest and the rest of the nation in the 1880s, Pueblo artists began to tailor their works toward the tourist market.

**Nancy Youngblood, Santa Clara, born 1955; Santa Fe, New Mexico. *Melon Jar*.** Ceramic, 1980s. 4 3/4 x 11 in. Diker no. 756. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

Nancy Youngblood is the modern descendant of an old pottery-making lineage. She inherited the blackware technique, with its highly polished surfaces, from her ancestors, but the ribbed “squash” form is her unique contribution. She is known for the meticulous quality of finish she achieves through laborious polishing in which only three ribs are completed in a three-hour stretch of work.



## PLAINS REGALIA AND DESIGN

The Indigenous nations of the Great Plains honored women's skills in hide tanning, quill embroidery, and beadwork as exemplary feminine abilities. In the mid-19th century, wealth stemming from trade in buffalo hides and payments from treaties flooded Plains communities with colorful glass beads imported from Venice, Italy, and from Belgium. Women beaded and embroidered the surfaces of a wide range of objects—garments, bags, baby carriers, knife and gun cases—to create a resplendent material culture. The wide range of colors of these small beads contributed to the development of increasingly distinctive tribal styles after the 1850s. Women's traditional role of creating value through productivity proved instrumental to the continued vitality of Plains culture into the modern era.

**Apsáalooke (Crow), Montana. Boy's Shirt.** Hide, glass beads, cotton fabric, wool cloth, sinew, cotton thread, about 1870. 21 5/16 x 31 1/2 in. Diker no. 665. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

Among northern Plains communities, children's dress for social or ceremonial occasions received special attention from artists. Lavishly decorated garments like this exquisite boy's shirt expressed love for and pride in young children, who were encouraged to participate in family and community events at an early age. This garment was likely made by an older female relation of the wearer, and features a mastery of technique and a lively approach to the elaborate geometry of the Apsáalooke beadwork style.



## PICTOGRAPHIC ARTS OF THE PLAINS

After the devastating Plains Wars of the 1860s and 1870s, which pitted tribes of the Great Plains against the U.S. Army over the increasing incursions of Euro-Americans to the West, the U.S. government confined the Plains tribes to reservations in Montana and the Dakotas to the north and in Oklahoma to the south. Some men recalled battles of the past with drawings on muslin fabric and in bound ledger books. Often scrupulously accurate, the drawings detail particular events and identify the participants by their specific regalia and arms. Plains artists also drew images of ceremonies and dances that seemed imperiled by the drastic changes of the period.

**Julian Scott ledger "Artist B," Ka'igwu (Kiowa), Oklahoma. Twelve High-Ranking Kiowa Men.** Pencil, colored pencil, and ink on paper, 1880. 7 1/2 x 12 in. Diker no. 059 LD. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

The artist of this ledger drawing, a member of the Ka'igwu (Kiowa) community of the Kiowa and Comanche Reservation of western Oklahoma, has depicted in great detail the colorful regalia of the 12 Kiowa figures of important status. They are shown on their way to visiting the government agent who oversees their reservation.

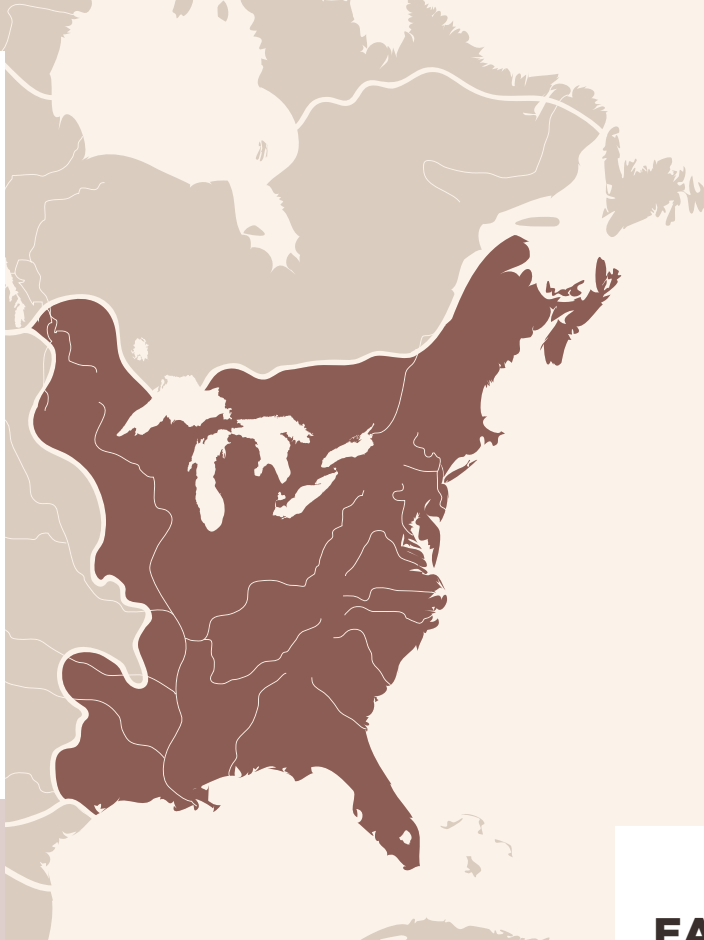


## SCULPTURAL OBJECTS FROM THE EASTERN WOODLANDS

European colonies located on the Eastern Seaboard induced vast changes in the interior of Indigenous North America. The massive wealth and material innovations of the Atlantic economies realigned trade arrangements and tribal alliances, triggered new antagonisms and conflicts, and brought the Native Nations of the East into the sphere of European imperial ambition. The Eastern Woodlands objects assembled for this exhibition date to the decades before or after the American Revolution. Their forms and their purposes reflect, often in subtle ways, the momentous transformations then taking place in the Native world.

**Muscogee (Creek) (?), Georgia or Alabama. Pipe Bowl.** Wood, brass (?), ferrous nails (?), tin, about 1780. 3 1/2 x 6 x 2 in. Diker no. 531. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

This wooden pipe bowl is carved in the form of a crouching human figure, elbows pressed against knees, hands clasped to the breast. The pose resembles those found in representations of chiefs carved on ancient stone pipes of the Cherokee and Muscogee. The figure on this pipe wears around his neck a silver crescent-shaped ornament called a *gorget*, the gift of a French or British trading partner.



## EASTERN REGALIA AND ORNAMENT

Throughout eastern and central Native North America, the tasks of tanning animal hides and fabricating clothing and decorating it traditionally fell to women. Their productive labor built the foundation of the North American fur trade when they prepared pelts and tanned hides for export to Europe. Women also fabricated treasured items from cloth, glass beads, silk ribbons, and other European manufactured goods for their own communities. When the fur trade became obsolete, these artists converted cash and goods received as treaty payments into wearable, portable wealth. Their stylistic innovations for ceremonial and dance regalia helped reinforce and revitalize traditional culture after Eastern Woodland tribes were removed from their ancestral territories in the East to reservations in Kansas and Oklahoma.

**Anishinaabe, Ojibwa, Ontario. Shoulder Bag (without strap).** Hide, porcupine quills, tin cones, silk ribbon, dyed hair, about 1820. Diker no. 586. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

This deerskin bag, which once had a strap, is embroidered with porcupine quills. It belonged to the Reverend Peter Jones, also known as Kahkewaquonaby or "Sacred Feather," an Ojibwa who became the first Canadian Indian to be ordained as a Methodist minister. He often wore the bag along with other traditional-style Ojibwa clothing when lecturing, preaching, and fundraising. Made by an Anishinaabe artist of eastern Ontario, it is decorated with a variety of traditional symbols, including a large thunderbird.





## INDIGENOUS OHIO

The area that is now Ohio (named for the Iroquois word for the Ohio River: “it is beautiful”) has seen Indigenous cultures going back to at least 7500 BCE. Mound Building peoples like the sophisticated Fort Ancient and Adena cultures built earthen effigy and burial mounds in southern Ohio beginning around 2,000 years ago. Later cultures in the state consisted of four major cultural divisions: the Lenape (Delaware) in the Muskingum Valley in eastern Ohio; the Shawnee along the Scioto River in southern Ohio; the Odawa (Ottawa) and Wendat or Huron (Wyandot) in the Maumee River Valley of northwest Ohio; and the Miami in the Miami Valley, western Ohio.

Most Indigenous peoples in Ohio were forcibly removed by the U.S. government to reservations in the West during the 19th century. As a result, there are now no federally recognized tribes in the state.

**Wendat (Huron), Ohio. Bowl.** Wood, about 1750. 4 1/4 x 6 1/4 in. Diker no. 566. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

The small size of this bowl suggests its purpose was more spiritual than culinary. Individuals with special powers used such bowls to prepare medicines to cure the sick, or gazed at the surface of liquid contained within to see events in the future or in distant locations. The distinctive haircut of the human head rising from one side of the bowl indicates that the bowl was carved during the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by an artist of the Wyandot (also known as the Wendat or Huron) people of the Sandusky River region of northern Ohio, just southeast of present-day Toledo.



## OHIO HISTORICAL MARKER: DEPARTURE OF THE WYANDOT INDIANS

*The text of the historical marker located at the site of the Old Mission Church in Upper Sandusky, Ohio:*

The 1817 Treaty of Fort Meigs opened much of northwest Ohio to white settlement. In return, the U.S. Government granted the Wyandot Nation permanent use of the Grand Reserve at present-day Upper Sandusky. There farming continued, a school was built, and, in 1824, this Mission Church was constructed by Indians and Methodist missionaries. However, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 called for relocation of all eastern Native Americans to areas beyond the Mississippi River. By 1840, all Ohio Indians had been removed except for the Wyandot, who refused to leave, preferring instead to stay upon their beloved Sandusky (now known as Killdeer) Plains. Facing considerable pressure from Federal authorities, the Wyandot Nation in 1842 agreed to relinquish the Grand Reserve and move west. From this site on July 12, 1843, 664 individuals began their week-long journey to awaiting steamboats at Cincinnati. The Wyandot were the last organized Native American people to leave Ohio, settling in modern-day Kansas and Oklahoma.





*Comanche Women*

## INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

There is no way to know how many Native Americans were living on the continent north of Mexico prior to European contact (circa 1492), but some experts estimate the population at about 10 million. Records do show that the population had plummeted to a low of about 250,000 by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of violence, disease, and famine induced by the policies and actions of European settlers and their descendants. Those numbers rebounded over the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the 2010 census reveals that 2.9 million Americans identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, with another 2.3 million listing American Indian or Alaska Native in addition to other races. There are more than 565 sovereign Indigenous Nations currently recognized by the United States government, with more seeking recognition, and more still who, by death, attrition, or merging with other groups, became extinct.

## INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Before 1492, there were approximately 300 languages spoken in North America north of Mexico. Today, only eight Indigenous languages have 10,000 or more speakers; many languages have been lost. The complex Navajo language was famously used as an unbreakable code during World War II, with bilingual members of the Navajo Nation, called code talkers, enlisting in the military to transmit communications in the Pacific Theater. During World War I, the Choctaw language was used to transmit some tactical messages.

Sources: Western Washington University, Indiana University, [navajocodetalkers.org](http://navajocodetalkers.org), [cia.gov](http://cia.gov).

Julian Scott ledger "Artist A," Ka'igwu (Kiowa), Oklahoma. *Honoring Song* (detail). Pencil, colored pencil, and ink on paper, 1880. 7 1/2 x 12 in. Diker no. 057 LD. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.



## INDIGENOUS LANDS

During the colonial period, Europeans took over Indian lands using the ancient Roman concept of *terra nullius*—a term meaning “nobody’s land”—in which the land was assumed to be unoccupied. When it became clear the land was, in fact, inhabited, colonists justified its seizure by declaring the land as “uncultivated”. After the American Revolution, the U. S. Government entered into treaties with Indian Nations—treaties that it often later violated—in order to “lawfully” displace Native people from their land. In 1830 the Indian Removal Act allowed the President to negotiate removal treaties with Indigenous peoples living east of the Mississippi River in exchange for lands farther west. Some nations, like the Seminoles, refused to leave, leading to violent confrontations and even war. One of dozens of Eastern tribes removed to what is now Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation was forced to travel a 1,000-mile Trail of Tears on which almost 4,000 people died from hunger, exhaustion, disease or other causes. By the 1850s, Native tribes were forcibly confined to reservations as Euro-American settlers pushed into the West.

Sources: National Congress of American Indians; *American Indian Nations: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (2007) edited by George P. Horse Capture, Duane Champagne, and Chandler C. Jackson; U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian; pbs.org.

## INDIGENOUS ARTISTS

Most of the objects displayed in *Indigenous Beauty* were never meant to be displayed in a museum gallery. Rather they were made for ceremonial use, or to display and communicate cultural knowledge. Techniques, patterns, forms, and iconography have been passed down from mother to daughter, father to son, generation to generation, but always allowing for innovation and personal expression. Today, many Native American artists remain connected to ancestral traditions, but work within the wider art world.

*“My mother learned how to make pottery from her mother...she learned from her mother. It goes back generation after generation. ...It’s a pretty amazing genealogical record that’s been kept.”*

**Tammy Garcia (Santa Clara, born 1969), artist**

*“My work with glass transforms the notion that Native artists are only best when traditional materials are used. It has helped advocate on the behalf of all indigenous people—affirming that we are still here—that we are declaring who we are through our art in connection to our culture.”*

**Preston Singletary (Tlingit, born 1963), artist**

**Preston Singletary, Tlingit, born 1963, Alaska. *Oystercatcher Rattle*.** Blown and sand-carved glass, human hair, 2011. 22 x 17 x 6 in. Diker no. 826. Courtesy American Federation of Arts.





# EXHIBITION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

For more details and more events, visit [toledomuseum.org/calendar](http://toledomuseum.org/calendar)

## Feb. 11: Master Series | David W. Penney with Charles and Valerie Diker

6 P.M. | Peristyle

David W. Penney is guest curator of *Indigenous Beauty* and Associate Director of Museum Scholarship at the National Museum of the American Indian; the Dikers collected the works in the exhibition.

## Feb. 12: Exhibition Opening Celebration

6–9 P.M. | Canaday Gallery

The event celebrates *Indigenous Beauty* and begins with a ceremony by representatives of American Indian nations with ancestral ties to Ohio.

## Feb. 13: Exhibition tour led by guest curator David W. Penney

2 P.M. | Canaday Gallery

## Feb. 19: AIA-Toledo Society lecture | Melissa Baltas-Zych, *Art, Architecture, and Urbanization of Cahokia, Native North America's First City*

7 P.M. | Little Theater

Melissa Baltas-Zych is Assistant Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Toledo.

## March 26: Lecture | Stephen Warren, *Indian Removal, Then and Now: A Retrospective on Race and Midwest Identities*

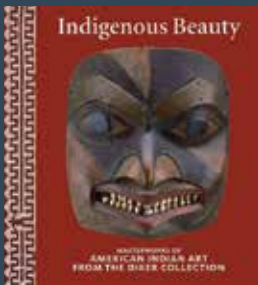
2 P.M. | Little Theater

Stephen Warren is Associate Professor of History at the University of Iowa and author of *The Worlds the Shawnee Made: Migration and Violence in Early America*.

## April 9: Reading | Margaret Noodin, *Weweni: Poems in Anishinaabemowin and English*

2 P.M. | Little Theater

Margaret Noodin is an American poet who writes in English and the language of the Anishinaabe, which includes the Odawa, Ojibwa, and Algonquin peoples. She is an Assistant Professor of English and American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Western Michigan University.



## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

This beautifully illustrated volume provides rare insight into many exquisite objects from one of the most comprehensive and superb collections of Native American art in private hands, the Charles and Valerie Diker collection.

By David W. Penney with Janet Catherine Berlo, Bruce Bernstein, Barbara Brotherton, Joe D. Horse Capture, and Susan Secakuku. American Federation of Arts in association with Skira Rizzoli, New York.

**Catalogue and other exhibition related merchandise  
available in the Museum Store and TMAstore.org.**

**FRONT COVER:** Tsimshian, British Columbia, *Maskette*. Wood, copper, opercula shell, pigment, 1780–1830. 7 1/10 × 5 15/16 × 3 9/16 in. Diker no. 681, Courtesy American Federation of Arts.



*Indigenous Beauty: Masterworks of American Indian Art from the Diker Collection* was organized by the American Federation of Arts and was made possible by the generosity of an anonymous donor, the JFM Foundation, and Mrs. Donald M. Cox.

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